



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT INTRODUCES ENHANCEMENT FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE
BUSINESS LICENSING TO CITY COUNCIL**

*Creating a clear pathway for growers to increase food access in their community
through a license that supports innovative business ideas*

CHICAGO — Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) introduced an ordinance to support the business activities of urban agriculture. The proposed Urban Agriculture Business License Enhancement Ordinance will reduce barriers that exist for growers to sell their produce. With these proposed changes, community gardens and urban farms would be able to sell whole uncut, unprocessed, produce directly to community residents, restaurants, private food stores, and wholesalers from an on-site permanent produce stand.

"Through Chicago's Food Equity Agenda, the City made a commitment to reduce food barriers to urban agriculture," said Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "The proposed changes in this ordinance uphold that commitment by creating a clear and equitable pathway for growers to sell their produce and, in turn, increase access to locally grown food across the city."

Chicago's urban grower community includes entrepreneurs, social enterprises, and community-based projects, and there is not a standalone license tailored to this sector's unique business needs. The City's current license options for the sale of produce do not align with their business models, causing growers to run into licensing challenges. Without a license, growers cannot participate in farmer's markets or other business opportunities, further challenging the potential for urban agriculture to build local wealth and support Chicago's local economy. The Urban Agriculture Business License Enhancement Ordinance will allow growers to have more viable business models and grow their businesses while providing access to healthy produce to communities across the city.

"The ordinance enhancement has the potential to make positive, long-term impacts on the health and well-being of Chicagoans," said BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer. "By addressing the need for more tailored urban agriculture licensing, we are



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taking the necessary steps to ensure growers are supported and even more consumers have access to fresh, locally-grown produce for their families.”

The Urban Agriculture Business License Enhancement Ordinance advances Mayor Lightfoot’s Food Equity Agenda. In February 2022, Mayor Lightfoot signed an executive order codifying Chicago’s first-ever Food Equity Council, a private-public partnership dedicated to transforming Chicago’s food system into one that is just and equitable. This council and its workgroups are dedicated to near-term priorities that address immediate needs as well as root causes of food inequities, including reducing barriers to urban agriculture. Co-created with Food Equity Council community leaders and city departments, the Urban Agriculture Business License Enhancement Ordinance is the first policy recommendation out of this partnership introduced to City Council.

“This small change has the potential to significantly impact Chicago’s nutritious food landscape,” said Viviana Okakpu, Co-Operations Steward for Advocates for Urban Agriculture. “By allowing community focused growers to be compensated for their labor, we can continue to chip away at the health and environmental inequities in our neighborhoods through culturally relevant food while honoring the work it takes to produce it.”

Okakpu also serves as the Co-lead for the urban agriculture workgroup of the Food Equity Council.

In addition to addressing licensing barriers, the Food Equity Council co-developed the Community Growers Program, which makes a \$2 million investment through the Chicago Recovery Plan in urban agriculture projects. In the first quarter of 2023, grants and technical assistance will be available for individual growers and small organizations to fund permanent water, hoop house, or other equipment installation — and to activate new urban agriculture sites on City-owned vacant lots. If the proposed Urban Agriculture Business License Enhancement Ordinance passes, this will allow the growers supported in this program to have a clear pathway to not only increase food access in their community but also have a viable business plan to sell their produce.

To learn more about the City’s commitment to food equity and the Food Equity Council please visit [Chi.gov/FoodEquity](https://chi.gov/FoodEquity).

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